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MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Population Growth in Latin America and Future Trends

Latin America has experienced a tremendous increase in population during the last 25 years. This growth contrasts sharply with the rate of expansion in North America and Europe during the same period as well as in Latin America during the first half of the 20th century. Essentially the increase, which has occurred primarily in urban areas, is due to a burgeoning birth rate and medical gains that have increased the life span. Population growth will cause great difficulty for Latin America during the next 25 years, but the problem may not be insurmountable. Family planning programs and agricultural improvements may help Latin Americans to win the race between population growth and existing food supply.

Rates of Growth

The following tables, [redacted]

[redacted] are useful in understanding Latin American growth rates.

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Growth of Population in the Latin American Countries during the
Most Recent Intercensal Period

Country	Intercensal Period	Population (000s)		Increase during Period		Annual Rate of Growth
		At Beginning of Period	At End of Period	Number (000s)	Percent	
North America						
Costa Rica	1963-1973	1,336	1,761	425	31.8	2.7
Cuba	1953-1970	5,829	8,553	2,724	46.7	2.0
Dominican Republic	1960-1970	3,047	4,006	959	31.5	2.7
El Salvador	1961-1971	2,511	3,549	1,038	41.3	3.7
Guatemala	1964-1973	4,285	5,212	927	21.6	2.2
Haiti	1950-1971	3,097	4,315	1,218	39.3	1.6
Honduras	1950-1961	1,369	1,885	516	37.7	3.0
Mexico	1960-1970	34,923	48,225	13,302	38.1	3.4
Nicaragua	1963-1971	1,536	1,895	359	23.4	2.6
Panama	1960-1970	1,076	1,428	352	32.8	3.0
South America						
Argentina	1960-1970	20,009	22,364	3,255	16.3	1.4
Bolivia	1900-1950	1,556	2,704	1,148	73.8	1.0
Brazil	1960-1970	70,967	94,509	23,542	33.2	2.9
Chile	1960-1970	7,374	8,853	1,479	20.1	1.8
Colombia	1964-1973	17,482	23,200*	5,718*	32.7*	3.1*
Ecuador	1950-1962	3,203	4,476	1,273	39.8	2.8
Paraguay	1962-1972	1,817	2,329	512	28.2	2.5
Peru	1961-1972	10,365	13,568	3,203	30.9	2.5
Uruguay	1963	—	2,596	—	—	—
Venezuela	1961-1971	7,524	10,722	3,198	42.5	3.8

Growth of Population in Latin America, 1950 to 1975

Country	Population (000s)		Increase, 1950 to 1975	
	1950	1975	Number (000s)	Percent
North America				
Costa Rica	45,500	94,200	48,700	107
Cuba	800	2,000	1,200	150
Cuba	5,500	9,200	3,700	67
Dominican Republic	2,100	4,600	2,500	119
El Salvador	1,900	4,000	2,100	111
Guatemala	2,800	5,500	2,700	96
Haiti	3,100	5,000	1,900	51
Honduras	1,400	2,900	1,500	107
Mexico	26,000	57,000	31,000	119
Nicaragua	1,100	2,300	1,200	109
Panama	800	1,700	900	113
South America				
Argentina	108,800	212,500	103,700	95
Argentina	17,200	25,000	7,800	45
Bolivia	2,700	5,000	2,300	85
Brazil	52,000	108,000	56,000	108
Chile	5,800	10,000	4,200	72
Colombia	11,000	24,200	13,200	120
Ecuador	3,200	7,000	3,800	119
Paraguay	1,300	2,700	1,400	108
Peru	8,500	15,000	6,500	76
Uruguay	2,100	3,100	1,000	48
Venezuela	5,000	12,500	7,500	150
Latin America	154,300	306,700	152,400	99

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The most noteworthy items are the very high growth rates registered since 1960 in Venezuela, Mexico, Colombia, and Brazil. These countries alone have almost two thirds of the region's population. It should also be noted that the "low" rate of increase in Argentina and Chile is several times higher than that of the US (about 0.6 percent per annum).

In 1950, Latin America's population was divided into three approximately equal parts--Brazil, the rest of South America, and the grouping of Panama, Central America, Mexico, and the three island republics. On an absolute basis, the population increase in Brazil during the last 25 years has been responsible for more than a third of the entire growth in Latin America.

In comparison with population growth in the rest of the world, in 1900 there was only one Latin American among every 37 members of the human race. In 1970, this ratio was one in every ten; and by 1980 it is expected to be one in nine. The nearly three-percent-per-year population growth recorded from 1960 to 1970 is almost unprecedented in history. Moreover, current rates of growth are above three percent per year in Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Colombia, Peru, Ecuador, and Venezuela. These very high rates are generally expected to continue into the next century.

Factors in Population Growth

The key to Latin America's population increase is the high birth rate and accompanying reduction in death rate. Immigration once played an important role, but during the last two decades has been inconsequential. Emigration, especially by the well-educated or unemployed, has become important socially and politically but had had little real effect on the growth rate.

The following table has been prepared from the best information available to the Inter-American Statistical Institute. The actual birth rates may even be higher.

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Reported Birth Rates, Death Rates, and Rates of Natural Increase of
Population in the Latin American Countries per 1,000

Country	Year	Birth Rate	Death Rate	Rate of Natural Increase
North America				
Costa Rica	1972	31.6	5.7	25.9
Cuba	1971	30.3	6.0	24.3
Dominican Republic	1970	40.1	6.0	36.1
El Salvador	1971	42.1	7.9	34.2
Guatemala	1972	42.5	9.4	33.1
Haiti	—	—	—	—
Honduras	1970	42.7	8.1	34.7
Mexico	1972	44.6	9.1	35.5
Nicaragua	1971	41.0	7.1	33.9
Panama	1972	34.5	5.7	28.8
South America				
Argentina	1968	22.6	9.5	13.1
Bolivia	1968	23.6	7.0	16.6
Brazil	—	—	—	—
Chile	1970	24.6	8.5	16.1
Colombia	1968	31.4	8.5	24.9
Ecuador	1971	38.7	10.1	38.6
Paraguay	1970	33.4	—	—
Peru	1967	32.0	7.6	24.4
Uruguay	1970	22.4	9.2	13.2
Venezuela	1972	38.6	6.6	30.2

Urban Growth

In addition to the high rate of population increase in Latin America as a whole, a startling redistribution of population from rural areas to the cities is going on within all countries of the region. Recent studies of this phenomenon indicate that approximately two-thirds of the urban population increase is due to migration from rural areas. According to UN statistics, by the turn of the century Latin America will have four cities with over ten million inhabitants--Mexico City, Sao Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, and Buenos Aires. Mexico City will be the largest in the world with over 30 million people.

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Brazil is the best example of urban growth. In 1950, 19 million or 36.5 percent of its population was classified as urban. Between 1950 and 1970 the urban population increased by 33 million, or by 173 percent. At the same time, the rural population increased by 8 million or only 24 percent. The state of Rio de Janeiro during this 20-year period registered a 90-percent gain in urban population and Sao Paulo increased 70 percent. Urban gains in other parts of the country, especially the northeast, were just as dramatic.

Mexico also experienced spectacular urban growth from 1950 to 1970. In 1950, only 43 percent of the country's 20 million inhabitants were classified as urban. During the last twenty years, however, the urban population has increased by 140 percent and the rural population by only 35 percent. As a result of this growth, by 1960 Mexico had joined Argentina, Chile, and Venezuela as the Latin American countries having predominantly urban populations.

Argentina's population has continued to concentrate in the urban confines of Buenos Aires during the past 20 years and the city will have more than ten million people by 1980. Colombia is experiencing the same kind of population concentration, but even more spectacular is its overall growth rate. During the 1970s, in fact, Colombia is almost certain to replace Argentina as the third most populous of the Latin American countries.

Conclusion

The following table is a projection of what Latin America's population may be in 1980. The rate of growth assumed in the statistics is an overall 2.7 percent, which is probably a conservative assessment for the region.

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Estimates of the Populations and Rates of Growth in 1975 and of the Populations in 1980 of the Latin American Countries

Country	Rate of Growth 1975	Estimated Populations (000s)		
		1975 Number	Percent	1980 Number
North America	3.0	94,200	30.7	107,600
Costa Rica	3.2	2,000	0.7	2,300
Cuba	1.8	9,200	3.0	10,100
Dominican Republic	3.0	4,600	1.5	5,200
El Salvador	3.0	4,000	1.3	4,600
Guatemala	3.0	5,500	1.8	6,300
Haiti	2.0	5,000	1.6	5,600
Honduras	3.1	2,900	1.0	3,300
Mexico	3.4	57,000	18.6	65,600
Nicaragua	3.0	2,300	0.7	2,600
Panama	3.2	1,700	0.5	2,000
South America	2.6	212,500	69.3	239,500
Argentina	1.5	25,000	8.1	26,700
Bolivia	2.7	5,000	1.6	5,600
Brazil	2.7	108,000	35.2	122,000
Chile	2.0	10,000	3.3	11,000
Colombia	3.2	24,200	7.9	28,000
Ecuador	3.3	7,000	2.3	8,100
Paraguay	3.0	2,700	0.9	3,100
Peru	3.1	15,000	4.9	17,200
Uruguay	1.2	3,100	1.0	3,300
Venezuela	3.3	12,500	4.1	14,500
Latin America	2.8	306,700	100.0	347,100

Latin America has made great strides in public health education and in applying medical technology during the past twenty years. These advances have made a significant contribution, however, to the population increase. The plain fact is that Latin America cannot sustain a population increase of 3 percent per year if its death rate continues to decline.